

He loved to talk about UFOs and aliens. His show was a vacation from serious. His humor was never at the expense of someone else.

I was so fortunate to be one of the many who became part of his large group of regulars. It all began with a phone call to his show when I was driving back from Jefferson City to Kansas City as a young State legislator. This was over 20 years ago. He was saying stuff on the radio—of course, I was listening to Mike Murphy as I drove because everybody listened to Mike Murphy. He was saying something on the radio that was not correct. This is before cell phones. I pulled my car off the highway. I remember to this day exactly where it was. I got on a pay phone, and I called his show because he was saying something that was not correct. I was scared to death. He took my call. I was scared. He was funny. And we became friends. Like hundreds of other people just like me, we became friends.

In fact, we became such close friends that he taunted me until I agreed to be part of the cattle drive. One year, there I was on the top of a horse riding through downtown Kansas City behind a bunch of cattle. That might have been the last year of the cattle drive because I think that was the year some of them escaped into a parking garage in downtown Kansas City, and the Kansas City police were called to see if we couldn't get them off the top of a multistory garage in downtown Kansas City.

I was blessed to be in a bleacher seat to watch his heart at work—from his annual Salvation Army show to small acts of kindness to mere acquaintances, to his incredible loyalty to his friends.

His heart was as enormous as his patience for BS was small. He also had no patience for pompous. Some of his famous shows were shows where someone came on his show who would be considered a big deal, a star. If that person began being arrogant on Mike Murphy's show, if that person started talking down to Mike Murphy's friends—his listeners—Mike would let him know in no uncertain terms that the interview was over, that he was not interested in allowing anyone to talk down to his pals—his listening audience.

I will never, ever forget the twinkle in Mike Murphy's eye. It is important that he remain one of Kansas City's brightest legends of all time.

My hope for Mike Murphy's memory—I am not surprised that Mike chose the first 17 days of March to meet his Maker because of the fun he had around St. Patrick's Day. My hope is that every St. Patrick's Day in Kansas City, people will raise a glass to Mike Murphy, and when they do, they will tell a funny story. It would be great if that story would be about Mike Murphy, but the most important thing is that it is a funny story. Let me tell you, Mike will not care if it is not even true.

To Mike Murphy, the kind of man who walks as a giant among us and we do not even realize it until he is gone, a man who never lost sight that the little salesman out there driving in his car and the mother at home doing her family's laundry were the most important people on the Earth—here's to you, Mike. Godspeed, my pal.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

CLEAN AIR ACT

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the importance of a landmark piece of legislation, the Clean Air Act. Congress passed the Clean Air Act over 40 years ago with broad bipartisan support from both Chambers of Congress, and President Nixon wisely signed it into law. Since then, we have seen remarkable benefits to the health of our Nation. We have seen significant reductions in pollution from lead, mercury, sulfur dioxide, and a host of other contaminants. America reduced pollution and made remarkable strides in improving public health even while our economy adjusted and thrived. In fact, the Clean Air Act has a long track record of promoting job creation and economic growth while reducing pollution.

The economic benefits of the Clean Air Act are significant. For every \$1 spent on Clean Air Act protections, we get \$30 of public health benefits in return.

In the year 2010 alone, the Clean Air Act saved 160,000 lives and avoided millions of cases of pollution-related illness, including 1.7 million cases of asthma exacerbation, 130,000 heart attacks, 86,000 emergency room visits, 3.2 million lost school days, and 13 million lost work days.

This is a profoundly important law. It protects every single American from the types of pollution that can cause asthma attacks, lost school days for young children, emergency room visits, heart attacks, strokes, and even premature deaths.

The House of Representatives recently passed a continuing resolution for the remainder of the fiscal year that would make truly Draconian cuts to Clean Air Act funding and authority. These policy riders do not belong in the 7-month budget. And I am glad the Senate recently voted down that legislation.

Upon passage of the House bill, the American Lung Association, which is the leading organization working to save American lives from the ravages of lung disease, said:

The House of Representatives also adopted amendments that would block implementation of the Clean Air Act and its lifesaving protections . . .

These provisions and others adopted by the House would result in millions of Americans—including children, seniors and people with chronic disease such as asthma—being forced to breathe air that is unhealthy.

Breathing air pollution can cause asthma attacks, heart attacks, strokes, cancer and shortened lives.

That is coming from one of the most respected public health organizations in the world telling us that this weakening of the Clean Air Act would have dire public health consequences, that more Americans will get sick from toxic pollution.

We can and should be flexible and listen to the industries affected by the law, but we cannot undermine its purpose. Legitimate concerns about regulation should be addressed so we can prosper and grow jobs in the United States of America. It is important that the Clean Air Act be enforced in a commonsense manner that is workable for American businesses, but we cannot abandon its core charges—to preserve public health and ensure the cleanliness of the air we breathe.

I know there is often tension between the EPA, the regulated community, and stakeholders seeking to navigate the Clean Air Act, and there probably always will be. Our economy functions best and in a way that is best for our citizens when we seek a robust Clean Air Act and are responsive to the needs of our economy.

An example of this working well is recent praise that the administration received from the CEO of a leading energy company, who said:

When I look at what EPA has done so far . . . it's actually been pretty moderate.

When the same CEO was asked whether Congress should delay the administrations's work to protect public health for 2 years, he said:

That's just two more years of uncertainty where I think a lot of the investment will remain on the sideline in our industry instead of being invested in technology. We know how to build . . . I don't support delay for those reasons.

I support continued implementation of the Clean Air Act and will oppose efforts to undermine this important law. For my part, the decision is very simple: We should let doctors and scientists dictate our public health policy instead of politicians. I hope my friends on both sides of the aisle will come to this same conclusion as well and vote against efforts to weaken the Clean Air Act.

For more than 40 years, we have seen that protecting the air we breathe does not have to come at a cost to the Nation's economy. Both can improve, both must improve hand in hand.

To close, I would like to reiterate that the Clean Air Act has been successful in reducing levels of dozens of dangerous air pollutants and protecting the health of millions of Americans, all while our economy grew. This is a landmark law that has had strong bipartisan support for decades. The Senate should not weaken it.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PUBLIC-FUNDED RADIO AND TELEVISION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have been around Congress a few years. When I served in the House of Representatives 16 years ago, the Republicans won control of Congress for the first time in 40 years. They promised to change how business was done in Washington and they elected Newt Gingrich of Georgia as Speaker of the House. On his first day on the job, Speaker Gingrich addressed a black tie dinner of happy supporters and took aim at an enemy he said was undermining America's values, and that enemy was Big Bird.

Newt Gingrich denounced public broadcasting as a sandbox for the rich and he condemned it for "eating taxpayers' money." He went on to say: "They are simply enclaves of the left using your money to propagandize your children against your values."

Once the Gingrich Republican revolutionaries finished passing their so-called Contract With America, Gingrich vowed he would do everything in his power to do away with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, National Public Radio, and the Public Broadcasting Stations. Fortunately, in the Republican and Democratic parties, cooler heads prevailed. Big Bird was spared.

Well, to borrow a line from former President Reagan, "Here we go again." When we should be talking about the serious budget deficit affecting America, the House Republican budget spent too much time resurrecting the old bumper stickers of the past. They went to America's bumper sticker museum and said: Well, let's see if there are some oldies but goodies here, and they loaded up the Republican budget bill with a lot of old issues. Some of them finally went back to the day when Newt Gingrich went after Big Bird. Sixteen years after Newt Gingrich, this new band of Republicans in the House is once again denouncing public broadcasting as a hotbed of subversive values, and they have vowed to pull the plug.

You may remember, Mr. President, our friends across the aisle actually tried to end funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting last November during the lameduck session. At that time, the rallying cry was outrage over NPR's firing of commentator Juan Williams. Now there is a new defunding effort underway and a new source of outrage. James O'Keefe, a rightwing activist with a video camera and a conservative agenda, released a video last week which he claims proves National Public Radio is a biased liberal organization that needs no Federal funding.

In the video, two allies of Mr. O'Keefe's pretend to be members of a Muslim education group who are con-

sidering making a large donation, they said, to NPR. Then they secretly recorded their meeting with two NPR executives.

If the name James O'Keefe rings a bell with Members of the Senate, it should. Remember some of the other things he was caught doing? It was James O'Keefe and his colleagues who posed as telephone repairmen and tried to lie their way into the office of our colleague, Senator MARY LANDRIEU of Louisiana. They were going to try to make one of their "gotcha" videos there. They went too far. At the end of it, Mr. O'Keefe pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor of entering Federal property under false pretenses. A Federal judge sentenced Mr. O'Keefe to 3 years probation, a fine of \$1,500, and 100 hours of community service.

This same Mr. O'Keefe, in 2009, posed with some of his friends as a pimp and prostitute to secretly film a discussion with staffers of the grassroots anti-poverty group ACORN. Their video of that meeting was so inflammatory Congress vowed to eliminate all Federal funding for that group.

I cannot tell you, Mr. President, how many amendments we had on the floor of the Senate—in the midst of all the problems we were facing in the country and around the world—focused on ACORN. Three separate investigations, incidentally, later cleared ACORN of any wrongdoing. A report by the Congressional Research Service found Mr. O'Keefe's undercover videotaping may have broken laws both in Louisiana and Maryland.

Mr. O'Keefe, obviously, is not too concerned about breaking a law if he thinks he is going to come up with a sensational video. He was convicted in Louisiana, as I mentioned earlier.

The New York Daily News—not exactly a liberal news organization—concluded, when it came to the ACORN incident, "they edited the tape to meet their agenda." As California's then-Attorney General Jerry Brown said, after they investigated the ACORN video:

Things are not always as partisan zealots portray them through highly selective editing of reality. Sometimes a fuller truth is found on the cutting room floor.

Mr. O'Keefe appears to be engaged in creative editing again, and this time his target is National Public Radio. That is not just my opinion. The Web site of none other than FOX News' own Glenn Beck—that is right, Glenn Beck—compares the edited and unedited versions of Mr. O'Keefe's latest video and concludes that the edited version appears to be deceptively edited in order to portray statements by one of the secretly recorded NPR executives out of context. An example: On the video, Ron Schiller, who was then in charge of fundraising for NPR, and has since been terminated, is heard to say:

It is very clear that we would be better off in the long run without Federal funding.

I have heard that repeated over and over; that this NPR fundraising execu-

tive said "we would be better off if we didn't have Federal funding." The far right has seized on this statement as proof NPR doesn't need it and shouldn't get it. But here is the part that ended up on the cutting room floor. Schiller explained, when they looked at the full transcript, that most "philanthropists" think NPR is almost fully funded by the government, which prevents many of them from donating. Mr. Schiller also said that if NPR lost all Federal funding now, "we would have a lot of stations go dark."

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting supports nearly 1,300 local radio and TV stations in communities all across America—in Illinois and I bet in West Virginia. Direct support for those stations makes up nearly 75 cents out of every dollar they spend. I know, because when you turn them on to listen to the news, they are begging for money. You send them a check and you think, I hope they will leave us alone for a little while.

Mr. President, 170 million Americans use public broadcasting services every month. That is more than half the population of America. In my State of Illinois, 1 million people listen to our 14 public radio stations, and 3 million people rely on our 8 public television stations. All totaled, funding for public broadcasting works out to about \$1.35 per American per year—11 cents a month. I would say that is a bargain. It is a fraction of what people would pay to get good information.

Eliminating Federal funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is going to force many smaller stations to close, if the House Republicans have their way. The first ones hit—West Virginia, the rural areas of Illinois, and smalltown America. They will be the ones to lose the service first. Rural communities will be hard hit, as they rely more than big stations in big cities on Federal funding.

Cutting all funding for public broadcasting? Does anybody seriously believe that will affect the deficit? But it would be a great loss to tens of millions of Americans who rely on public broadcasting for quality entertainment and honest, in-depth news coverage. With the momentous changes occurring in the world, and the major challenges facing our Nation, it is essential we maintain the integrity and viability of public broadcasting. There is nothing in commercial broadcasting that can replace it.

Some of our conservative friends—and one of them came up to me on the plane when I was heading home to Chicago last weekend—say they don't object so much to the content of public broadcasting, they just object philosophically to the whole idea of taxpayers' money being spent to subsidize radio and TV. They said let them go on the free market. If they can survive, fine; if they cannot, so be it. Here is what they ignore: FOX, NBC, ABC, CBS, CNN, virtually all the major network stations receive billions of dollars each year in public subsidies. How?